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BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
EMERGING THREATS AND CAPABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE  
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Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to address the committee so soon after confirmation as the 9<sup>th</sup> commander of United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).

My intent today is to provide a retrospective view of USSOCOM as we approach our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. I will briefly highlight the lessons learned from more than a decade of sustained combat operations. I will then close with a view of the existing threats and preventative opportunities as we chart the path forward for USSOCOM.

As the only combatant command legislated into being by Congress, USSOCOM has a distinct appreciation for the advocacy and unique authorities entrusted to us. Since 1986, Special Operations Forces (SOF) have flourished under the direction of a focused strategic headquarters and a dedicated fiscal authority. Like the rest of the nation, the seminal events of 9/11 served as a historical line of demarcation for the command. SOF's core capabilities and extraordinary record of performance has endured

throughout and continues today in the most demanding operational environments around the world.

### Global and Local

SOCOM's missions and core capabilities are characterized by direct and indirect operational approaches to special operations. The direct is characterized by precision lethality partnered with focused intelligence; the indirect -- a global persistent presence and local cultural understanding. The global and local elements are both enduring. These capabilities are mutually supportive and necessary elements of effective SOF force employment.

The urgent and largely kinetic direct actions reflective of many counterterrorism (CT) operations since 9/11 continue to disrupt Al Qaeda and its affiliates by capturing, killing, and interdicting their networks while denying access to weapons of mass destruction. Although these operations may sometimes be the most visible, and they are certainly essential, they do not fully encompass SOF's unique contributions and full value.

Engaging and influencing key populations, empowering local host nation forces, and increasing capability through partner development, all contribute to locally-led defeat of threats. These are the hallmarks of our broader mission sets. There is no reliable numerical or material equivalent to building trust, engendering confidence, and assuring host nation forces of our

support and reliability. Illustrative examples of the value seen in these enduring relationships abound throughout USSOCOM's history. SOF's decade-long partnership in Colombia assisted that democracy in the effective security force development necessary to reclaim its sovereign territory from narcoterrorists. Similar outcomes continue today via work with partner nation security forces throughout Central and South America, Europe, Asia, the Pacific, and across Africa and the Middle East. These underreported, yet vital, contributions are prioritized and targeted in support of the collective security requirements outlined in national policy. They are planned and executed by SOF provided to the geographic combatant commanders through the Theater Special Operations Commands.

In tangible ways, these forces are changing the global conditions that enable responsible local solutions to the violent extremism, insurgencies, and criminal enterprises threatening the national sovereignty and economic prosperity needed for a stable and peaceful future. Importantly, we are also seeing emulation of SOCOM's structural and operational approaches globally. We have assisted with the stand-up of sister commands in several key partner nations including continued support and a valued relationship with NATO's SOF headquarters. Our partnership and interoperability with our allies has been strengthened through combined education,

training, and exercises - and often tested and strengthened in combat on battlefields over the last decade.

### Looking Ahead

In the near term, USSOCOM and SOF will continue to plan and execute our responsibilities as outlined in Defense Department policy and guidance supporting national objectives. First, we will continue to lead and deliver the nation's premier CT fighting force. Simultaneously we must also provide, with Service enablers, the preponderance of forces for sustained counterinsurgency and stability operations globally. This combined mission is currently seen in the simultaneous SOF leadership and tacit execution of the CT and Village Stability Operations in Afghanistan. As a result of these unique enduring SOF requirements, the projected conventional force drawdown in Afghanistan through 2014 is increasingly dependent upon significant SOF presence. Conventional force reductions will not equate to comparable reductions in SOF. But, when fully integrated within a comprehensive whole-of-government approach, the breadth of capability displayed in this current campaign provides the clearest evidence of SOF's inherent flexibility, agility, and value in addressing irregular missions. One of the explicit lessons of the last decade of conflict is the absolute necessity to share information, plan, and operate in concert with our interagency and foreign partners. Born of our extensive

presence and cultivated relationships, SOF has uniquely embraced this approach.

#### Effective and Efficient

As requirements begin to subside across United States Central Command's area of responsibility, SOF employment can return to a more balanced application against the highest priority countries and capability areas from missions that currently consume 86% of the deployed force. Here, SOF will continue to offer a deep, adaptive understanding of these environments as a cost effective hedge against uncertainty. SOF presence retains operational access for decisive action if required through a small, unobtrusive, persistent forward engagement in many countries where a more overt presence is unacceptable. SOF are exclusively recruited, assessed, selected, and trained to perform these difficult missions. They continue as the nation's highest return-on-investment military force.

Notably, these three competing requirements equate to a significant increase on the global demand and requirement to develop the force. Even with the Quadrennial Defense Review-directed doubling of the force through a measured 3-5% annual growth and tripling of our budget since 9/11, the four-fold increase in operational tempo has placed pressure on the force. While SOF by nature are hardened and resilient warriors, my predecessor, ADM Eric Olson, directed a task force to examine

what he described as "a fraying around the edges" of the force. That study is now concluding and results will be shared shortly. Based on this effort, we are proactively implementing actions to reduce pressure on the force and families by prioritizing and, when possible, adding predictability to force employment. This effort is paramount moving forward as it protects and maintains the long-term health of our most precious resource, the SOF operator and families of which we continue to ask so much.

As we look to the future security environment, we see emerging technologies that empower populations and non-state actors to challenge traditional nation states. Gaining fundamental understanding of the underlying causes and conditions of conflict in this emergent landscape, beyond the specific threats and ideologies, is central to anticipating and deterring costly conventional military engagements. I am prepared to discuss specific existing and emergent threats in a classified forum, to include the changing environment that will continue to produce additional security challenges.

As assessed, this future makes the case for the continued support of this magnificent force all the more compelling. As with our inception nearly twenty-five years ago, USSOCOM's and Special Operations Forces' success remains indebted to your sustained support and advocacy.